

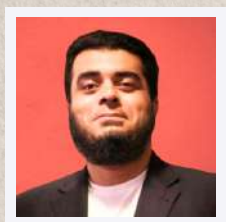
✦✦ Mohammad Zahid

# ZAKAT AL-FITR MADE EASY

A concise guidebook to understanding  
Zakat comprehensively ✦✦



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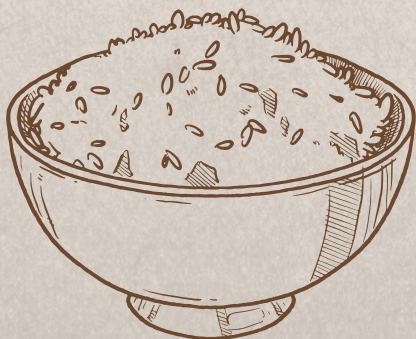


## What is Zakat al-Fitr?

The term Zakat al-Fitr is comprised of two words - 'Zakat' means growth and purification and al-Fitr comes from the word إفطار or breaking the fast.

Zakat al-Fitr or Sadaqah al-Fitr is of the two obligatory charities enjoined upon Muslims. The other is Zakat al-Maal for those who meet the relevant conditions. Zakat al-Fitr was legislated with the fasting of Ramadan in 2AH just 2 days before Eid. Based on this, we understand that Zakat al-Fitr was actually legislated before Zakat al-Maal.

Sheikh Zafar al-Hasan حفظه الله highlights that one of the reasons behind its name is that it becomes obligatory immediately after the last iftar of Ramadan. It could be paid in advance but it is only after the last iftar that it becomes an obligation upon the people.





We know the night of Eid by the occurrence of one of two things:

- We have fasted the complete thirty days of Ramaḍan. Hence, the night of Eid is after sunset on that day.
- By sighting the new moon on the thirtieth night, in which case (what would have been) the thirtieth night would be the night of Eid. It is important to remember that in the Islamic calendar, the night comes before the day.

It is an obligation upon every Muslim to pay this Zakat to show gratitude to Allah for allowing us to fast and experience the blessed month of Ramadan and also to make up for any shortcomings that we might have had while fasting. It is also to make sure that everyone is taken care of on the Day of Eid. Those who have enough food for themselves and their families on the eve of Eid are obliged to pay it.

Imam Wakee' ibn al-Jarrah رحمه الله said, "The parable of Zakat al-Fitr is to the (blessed month) month of Ramadan like the prostration of forgetfulness is to prayer. Zakat al-Fitr makes up for deficiencies in fasting just as the prostration (of forgetfulness) makes up for deficiencies in prayer." [Tareekh Baghdad]

Imam Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbali رحمه الله mentioned the following while discussing the end of the month of Ramadan, "Umar ibn Abdul Aziz wrote to the major cities commanding them to conclude Ramadan with seeking forgiveness and charity - meaning the Zakat al-Fitr. For the Zakat al-Fitr serves as a purification for the fasting person from whatever vile language or actions he may have done, while seeking forgiveness serves to repair what vile language and actions ate away of the fast. [Lataif al-Ma'arif]

Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz رحمه الله said: "He (the Prophet ﷺ) paid Zakat al-Fitr then he went out for the prayer - i.e., Salat al-Eid." [Ahkam al-Qur'an]

Allah says,

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّىٰ

"Successful indeed are those who purify themselves, remember the Name of their Lord, and pray." [Surah al-A'la, 14-15]

Purifying here refers to purifying the soul of the one who has fasted the month of Ramadan. Amongst the zakat to be paid is zakat al-fitr. Zakat al-Fitr is usually placed at the end of the chapter of zakat in books of fiqh as it is not compulsory on one's wealth and nor is it related to one's wealth in the first place. It is related to the person themselves.



قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى  
وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

**“Successful indeed are  
those who purify  
themselves, remember the  
Name of their Lord, and  
pray.”**

[Surah al-A'la, 14-15]



Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه narrated, 'The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) enjoined Zakat al-fitr on the one who fasts (Ramadan) to purify him from any indecent act or speech and for the purpose of providing food for the needy. It is accepted as Zakat for the person who pays it before the Eid prayer and it is sadaqah for the person who pays it after the Eid prayer.' [Abu Dawud]

We also give Zakat al-Fitr to be thankful to Allah for being able to witness and complete the blessed month of Ramadan. The Prophet ﷺ made Zakat al-Fitr more general and did not restrict it to only those that were able to fast. The obligation of zakat al-fitr is reported as a consensus by Imams al-Mundhir, al-Nawawi, Ibn Qudamah, and Ibn Hazm among many others.



## Whom Does it Benefit?

This Zakat is given so that the poor and the needy in our communities they can also enjoy and celebrate Eid.

It is recommended and not obligatory to give Zakat Al-Fitr for the foetus in the mother's womb.

Zakat al-Fitr may be given to the eight categories of people to whom zakah al-Maal may be given. This is the opinion of the majority of scholars.



According to the Maliki madhab, one of the opinions of Imam Ahmad and the opinion of Imam Ibn Taymiyyah is that it should be given exclusively to the poor and needy.

A poor person is classified as one who does not have enough money to satisfy his basic needs. Another important point to remember is that it is not permissible for the one who gives Zakat al-Fitr to buy it back from the one to whom he has given it. This would become a form of business that is based on deception and cheating Allah.



It is not permissible to give it to anyone except a needy Muslim. This ruled out non-Muslims. They can be helped with normal sadaqah funds instead if there is a need.

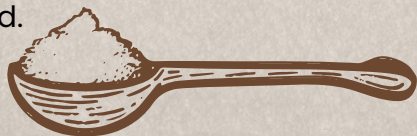
It is not permissible to zakat al-fitr to those on whom one is obliged to spend as they should be getting taken care of anyways in the first place by this person. An easy rule of thumb to understand this is - You have to spend on them if you would inherit from them. If you would inherit from them then it is not permissible to give them zakat, but if you would not inherit from them then there is nothing wrong with giving them zakat.

Or in even simpler terms, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله explains, "The basic principle in our view is that it is essential that the one who spends be an heir of the one on whom he spends, except for direct ascendants and descendants, in which case the issue of inheritance is not a condition. [Sharh al-Mumtī']

Imam al-Nawawi رحمه الله said, "If a child is wealthy, his financial maintenance and Zakat Al-Fitr are due on him from his wealth and it is neither due upon his father nor grandfather. This opinion was adopted by Abu Hanifa, Muhammad (ibn Al-Hasan), Ahmad and Ishaq."

Salah and Zakat are mentioned multiple times throughout the Quran. One of the pearls of wisdom that scholars mention is that this is because it combines the inward state of a person in salah as well as the outward state of a person in zakat. In salah, a person's sincerity, obedience, commitment, and love for Allah are seen. In zakat, a person's sincerity, obedience, commitment, and love for carrying out the commands of Allah are seen.

Along with this, salah brings the community together. Salah and the Masjid form the backbone of the community. Zakat empowers and uplifts the weaker sections of society. One way to look at it is that, if we are not connected with the Masjid and our salah in the congregation, we wouldn't know the condition of our society and who would need our support and zakat. One of the hardest part of Zakat al-Fitr and what makes it such an honourable act of worship is for one to know the poor of the community who need food.



## Who Needs To Pay It?



Narrated Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) enjoined the payment of one Sa' of dates or one Sa' of barley as Zakat al-Fitr on every Muslim slave or free, male or female, young or old, and he ordered that it be paid before the people went out to offer the Eid prayer. [Bukhari]

It is obligatory on all males and females as per the majority of the scholars including Imams Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad. The only person to hold an opposing view of it being recommended and not obligatory is the esteemed Imam Abu Hanifa. Zakat al-Fitr is not obligated upon non-Muslims. Zakat is a form of purification. Non-Muslims cannot be purified unless they become Muslim.

There is no mention of nisab in the narration as a condition for Zakat al-Fitr unlike as in Zakat al-Maal. The Hanafi madhab states that anyone who meets the condition of nisab is obligated to pay zakat al-fitr even if what he owns is in the form of clothes or furniture etc.

Nisab is the equivalent in cash, gold silver, merchandise, etc worth of 85 grams of gold. This position restricts zakat al-fitr quite a lot and it is best to make it inclusive of all. As per the majority of the scholars, as long as a person has enough to eat for himself and his dependants for the day of Eid, zakat al-fitr becomes obligatory upon him.

It is best for each individual to pay for themselves and if not possible then the guardian can pay on behalf of everyone he is in charge or responsible of. If people are dependent on someone, then that person is obligated to pay on their behalf.

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "There is no Zakat to be paid on one's slave, except for Zakat al-Fitr (indicating that a Muslim must pay it on behalf of all of those he is responsible for)." [Muslim]

Imam Ibn al-Qudamah رحمه الله said, "Anyone who gets married, has a baby born to him or becomes Muslim before the sun sets on that day, has to give Zakat al-Fitr (on behalf of himself and/or his new wife or new baby), but if that happens after sunset, he does not have to give it... Whoever dies after sunset on the night of fitr, sadaqat al-fitr must be given on his behalf. This is what Ahmad stated." [Al-Mughni]

Imam al-Shafi'i رحمه الله explained the distribution and said, "Everyone who, at the beginning of Shawwal, has enough food for himself and those whom he is supporting, for that day, and has enough to give Zakat al-Fitr on behalf of them and himself, should give it on behalf of them and himself. If he only has enough to give on behalf of some of them, then he should give on behalf of some of them. If he only has enough for himself and those whom he is supporting, then he is not obliged to give Zakat al-Fitr on his own behalf or on behalf of those whom he is supporting." [Al-Umm]

Scholars state that when a person is calculating his Zakat al-Fitr, and one whose behalf he should pay, he should start with himself and then the closest people first. So, the person gives it on behalf of himself, then his wife, then his children, then his parents, then the rest of his relatives in order of closeness, following the pattern laid out in the rules governing inheritance. Likewise, if a person has limited money but more than enough such that zakat al-fitr becomes obligatory, then a person follows the same sequence for whom he pays to an extent till it is no longer obligatory upon him to pay zakat al-fitr.

Imam al-Shafi'i رحمه الله summarized this and said, "Who I say is obliged to give Zakat al-Fitr, if a child is born to him, or he takes possession of a slave, or someone becomes one of his dependents, at any time during the last day of Ramadan, then the sun sets on the night of the crescent of Shawwal, he has to give Zakat al-Fitr on that person's behalf." [Al-Umm]

There is a difference of opinion with regard to paying zakat al-fitr on behalf of the foetus but it is best to do so to remain on the safe side as this was something established by Uthman Ibn Affan. Imam Ahmad holds that Zakat al-Fitr is also obligatory for a foetus because it is permissible to assign property to a foetus by means of a will. This is when the soul has been breathed into it, i.e. it is more than four months old, before which it is not considered to be alive since the soul is only breathed into it after that time.

### **But I did not fast, why should I pay this zakat?**

Even if a person did not fast, they are obliged to pay zakat al-fitr as long as they are Muslim. The word “young” in the hadith narrations includes small children and women who are menstruating or pregnant and cannot fast.

Sheikh Saleh al-Munajjad حفظه الله explained, “Zakat al-fitr is prescribed because it is a purification for the one who fasted, but attaining this purification is not a condition of it being obligatory. A similar case is the zakat of one’s wealth, which has also been prescribed in order to purify the soul: “Take Sadaqah (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, and invoke Allaah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of security for them; and Allaah is All-Hearer, All-Knower” [Surah al-Tawbah, 103]. Despite that zakat is obligatory in the case of wealth belonging to a small child who does not need to be purified because no bad deeds are recorded for him.”

Sheikh Ibn Jibreen رحمه الله gave another very interesting explanation and said, "It is paid on behalf of children and those who are not accountable, and those who did not fast because of an excuse such as sickness or travel. So the purification is for the guardians of those who are not accountable, and it is a purification for the one who did not fast because of an excuse, on the assumption that he will fast once the excuse is no longer in effect, so it is purification in advance before he fasts or completes his fast." [Fatawa al-Zakat]

Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله writes, "Owing a debt does not exempt a person from paying the zakat unless he cannot afford to pay the zakat after paying the debt. This is because the debt must be paid when sought and it is payable, due to the Prophet's ﷺ words, "It is wrong for a person to delay paying his debt if he can afford to pay it." [Bukhari] Hence, if he has to pay his debt, he must pay and he becomes exempt from the zakat if that is all he has." [Sharh al-Mumtī]



## When Is It Due?

Zakat al-Fitr is a time-restricted act of worship. It becomes obligatory when the sun sets on the last day of Ramadan. The best time to give it is between the Fajr and Eid Prayer. The Zakat must be paid before Eid Salah. For this reason, it is Sunnah to delay the Eid prayer on Eid al-Fitr so as to allow enough time for those who have to give Zakat al-Fitr to do so, and to have something to eat before coming for the prayer.

The practice of some of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ was to pay Zakat al-Fitr one or two days before Eid (on 28, 29 or 30 of Ramadan).



Imam Naafi' رحمه الله said: "Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه used to give on behalf of the young and the old, and he even used to give on behalf of my sons. He would give to those who took it, and it would be given a day or two before (Eid) al-Fitr." [Bukhari]

Can it be paid even earlier? If a person is afraid that there is not enough time for the money to reach a certain place and for food to be bought and distributed before Eid, then it can be collected and paid off before as well. This is permissible even if that is before Ramadan.

If not on a personal basis, one can appoint someone trustworthy to buy and distribute zakat al-fitr on your behalf. The final distribution though, should not happen except at the prescribed time. This is what is usually seen in countries like Malaysia etc where the government has taken the responsibility to collect and disburse zakat al-fitr for the public. Giving it at any time throughout or from the beginning of Ramadan is the position adopted by the Hanafi and Shafi'i madhahib.

We learn that at the time of the Prophet ﷺ zakat al-fitr used to be collected beforehand and kept in Masjid al-Nabawi so that it could be distributed in time to the poor and needy. This is seen as narrated by Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه in the long narration where he encountered Shaitan trying to steal from the zakat.

If it is paid after the Eid prayers, then it is counted only as normal charity and the rewards of zakat al-fitr are missed out. So make sure you pay before that.



Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ obligated Zakat al-Fitr as purification of the fasting person from vain talk and misbehaviour, as food for the poor. Whoever pays it before the Eid prayer, is accepted as Zakat. Whoever pays it after the Eid prayer, is part of voluntary charity. [Abu Dawud]

The head of the household is responsible for making sure Zakat al-Fitr has been paid. If the children cannot pay it themselves, the head of the household should pay on their behalf.

What if the payment is delayed? Imam Shamsul Haqq al-'Azeemabadi رحمه الله wrote, "Obviously, the one who gives Zakat al-Fitr after the prayer is like one who did not give it because they have in common the fact that they did not give this obligatory charity. Most scholars think that giving it before Salat al-Eid is only mustahab, and they confirmed that it is fine to give it at any time until the end of the day of Fitr, but this opinion is refuted by the hadith.

With regard to delaying it until after the day of Eid, Ibn Ruslaan said: "This is haram by consensus, because it is zakat (it is bound by time), so the one who delays it must be committing a sin, as is the case when one delays a prayer." [Awn al-Ma'bood]



Even if a person has gone past the designated time, they still have to pay it and clear the obligation from one's shoulders as it is a form of debt that needs to be cleared. Yet, it will be counted only as charity and not zakat al-fitr.

If a person has a valid excuse for not issuing his zakat before the Eid prayer, he may issue it afterwards without blame. This is analogous to the case of the one who misses a prayer due to oversleeping or insanity. It was narrated that Abu Qatadah رضي الله عنه said: "They told the Prophet (ﷺ) that they had slept and missed the prayer. He said: 'There is no negligence when one sleeps, rather negligence is when one is awake. If any one of you forgets a prayer or sleep and misses it, let him pray it when he remembers it.'" [Ibn Majah]

Imam Ibn Qudamah رحمه الله said, "If he delays it (zakat al-fitr) until after the day of Eid, he is sinning and he has to make it up." [al-Mughni]

For someone that was not practising and started practising later in life, they have to pay the due of zakat as well. This is because Zakat Al-Fitr was the poor people's right and they did not receive it, hence, it takes the ruling similar to any other debt. Even if the dependants under him are now eligible to pay their own zakat al-fitr, he is required to hasten to give it because - for all those years it was obligatory upon him. Why? The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "The debt of Allah is worthier of being paid back." [Bukhari and Muslim]



## Where Should It Be Paid?

It is better to give Zakat al-Fitr to the poor in one's own country. However if there is a more needy country, then it can be sent abroad.

Imam al-Shafi'i رحمه الله said, "I prefer to share out Zakat al-Fitr myself rather than give it to the one who is collecting it."



Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله said, "If the one who wants to give zakah appoints someone else to give it on his behalf, he is still responsible for it until he is certain that his deputy has carried out his instructions." [Ahkam Zakat al-Fitr]

The Sheikh further adds, "The donation must reach the recipient or the recipient's representative before the (Eid) prayer. The recipient may make the donor his representative (i.e. he asks the donor to hold onto the donation for him until a scheduled time)....It is not enough for a donor to say to the recipient, "I have some zakat for you," until the recipient actually receives the donation or makes the donor his representative." [Sharh al-Mumti']

Imam Ibn Qudamah said رحمه الله, "As for Zakat al-Fitr, it should be shared out in the country where it became obligatory, whether a person has wealth there or not because it is the reason why zakat became obligatory..." [al-Mughni]

Travelling does not waive the obligation of zakat al-Fitr. A person has to pay zakat al-fitr wherever he is located at the time it becomes obligatory. As for the dependents like his wife and children, it is best to pay zakat al-fitr for them in the same country where they are located.

Another wisdom that scholars mention for zakat to be distributed where one is living is for the people around him to benefit and also to make sure that the symbols of the Islamic identity are maintained and propagated in the society. It is a form of education as well for the children when they see such acts of worship being carried out by their families.



## What Should Be Paid?



Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri رضي الله عنه said: "We used to discharge it (zakat al-fitr) in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ as a Saa' of food, and our food was dates, and barley, and raisins and cottage cheese." [Bukhari]

Imam al-Tirmidhi رحمه الله said, "This is acted upon by some of the people of knowledge. Their view is that a portion (saa') of any food is valid; it is the opinion of Al-Shafi'i, Ahmad, and Ishaq. Some of the people of knowledge among the companions of the Prophet and others said a portion of any food is valid, except for wheat, for which is it permissible to give a half portion; it is the opinion of Sufyan al-Thawri, Ibn al-Mubarak, and the people of Kufah." [Tirmidhi]

1 Saa' of food, dried dates, barley, raisins, dried cheese or whatever is the staple food of the country. It should not be paid in the form of cash unless it is the ultimate final option. We have Zakat al-Maal for that. The strongest position with regards to what is to be given as zakat al-fitr is that it should be the staple food of the country and not just restricted to dates or barley.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله explains, "If it was said, 'You must give a saa' of dates everywhere, whether it is the staple food or not,' this is a disputed matter which is subject to ijtihad. There are some people who say that it is obligatory, and others who say that in each country it is obligatory to give a saa' of whatever is the staple food there, as the Prophet ﷺ specified five types of food for Zakat al-Fitr, so in each country they can give the equivalent of a saa' of their staple food. This is more correct, and is closer to the principles of Shariah, for how can you make it obligatory for people whose staple food is fish, for example, or rice or pearl millet, to give dates? ... And Allah is the Source of strength."  
 "[I'laam al-Muwaqqi'een]

There used to be two measurements by the same name of Saa' that were used by the people: Saa' al-Hijazi and Saa' al-Iraqi. The saa' mentioned in the ahadith refers to the Saa' al-Hijazi.

An interesting story occurs here. The Ahnaf opined that the Saa' in question was the Saa' al-Iraqi. Once, Imam Abu Hanifa's primary student Imam Abu Yusuf رحمه الله came for Hajj and met Imam Malik رحمه الله in Madinah. He asked him about the measurement of the Saa' and Imam Malik said, "Five and one-third ratls." Abu Yusuf said, "What's your basis for saying that?" Imam Malik said to some of the people with him, "Go and fetch the saa's that you have."

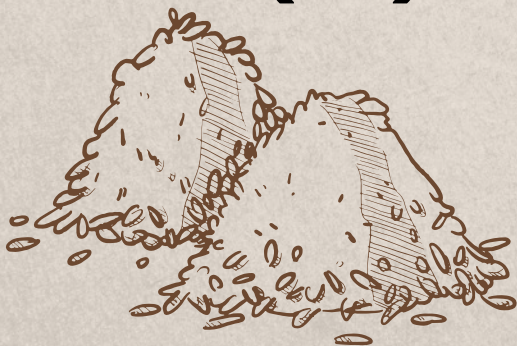
So many of the people of Madinah, (from the families of) both the Muhajirun and the Ansar, came, and every one of them brought a saa' (with him) and said, "This is the saa' which I inherited from my father, who inherited it from his father, who was one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ." Imam Malik said, "This sort of widespread knowledge is more reliable in our opinion than hadith." So Imam Abu Yusuf accepted Imam Malik's opinion that the Saa' mentioned and its measurement was indeed Saa' al-Hijazi. The Saa' of Madinah has its own sanad and it is passed on till date. I was blessed to attain a sanad to this in Madinah in 1443AH.

What is this Saa' al-Hijazi? 1 Saa' of the Prophet ﷺ is four complete scoops as scooped up with two cupped hands (like one does while making dua). A Mudd is a volumetric measure of what two cupped hands of an average man can hold. In modern measurements, a mudd is 0.75L, which means that a saa' is 3.0L. Since volumes of different items differ in mass according to how heavy or light the item is, scholars have taken good quality dense wheat as a standard, which is equivalent in its weight to lentils. Based on this measurement of food in kilograms, some scholars approximate it to be 2.2kg while some approximate it to be 3kg. This discrepancy occurs because a saa' is a measure of volume and not weight. Hence, it is always better to give a bit more to be on the safe side.

**One Saa' (صاع)**

**=**

**Four Mudd (مد)**

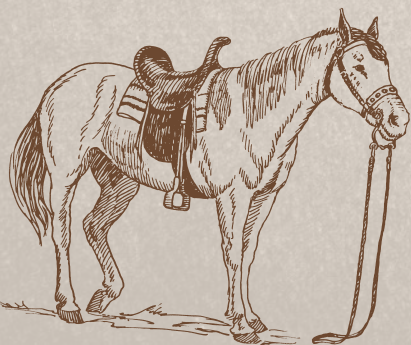


Some of the Maliki scholars went a step forward and became very strict in terms of the amount distributed and their point of view also holds strong weight and showcases their love for adhering to the Sunnah. In his commentary on Mukhtasar Khaleel, Ash-Sheikh ad-Dardeer رحمه الله says, "It is recommended not to provide more than a saa'; rather, it is disliked to do so. This is because the Prophet ﷺ defined the exact amount that is to be paid and, therefore, paying extra should be a disliked innovation in the religion. This is just like saying extra tasbeeh after the thirty-three times (after prayers)."

On the flip side, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله states, "A person does not have to donate more than a saa'. If he possesses more than his provision for the night and day of Eid but it is less than a saa', he gives that amount, and he is not exempt. So, if he has half a saa' left after his daily provision, he must donate that half, because Allah says, "Save yourself from Allah's punishment to the best of your ability." [Sharh al-Mumti']

This discussion of daily needs or provision is where the Hanafi opinion of nisab comes in. According to Imams Malik, al-Shafi'i and Ahmad, the required provision is the daily bread and the daily bread of those for whom the person is responsible for. Imam Abu Hanifa stipulates that they must own at least the niṣab of Zakat on top of his house, furniture, clothes, horse, weapons, and slaves.

Imam Ahmad رحمه الله stated that it is permissible to distribute one saa' among a group of people or to give the entirety of the zakat to one person as well.



## The Flip Side

Even during the Prophet ﷺ there were many poor sahaba but none of the sahaba paid zakat al-fitr as money as per the most authentic reports.

Sheikh Ibrahim Nuhu حفظه الله mentions the benefit of giving food for Zakat al-Fitr instead of money: "Either the person eats it and satisfies the hunger or sells it to make a profit.



When he wants to sell it he'll have to make an effort for it and this will teach him about business. If you just give money, they'll spend it and beg again. This is a way how the Sunnah indirectly teaches the people to both meet their needs and also learn how to sustain themselves."

Likewise, Sheikh Ibn al-Uthaymeen رحمه الله said, "Some people say that if we give the poor people saa' of food and they go and sell it. We see them do so in front of us and they sell it for half the price or less or more. So we say to this: we have nothing to do with the action of the poor. It is upon us to do what we have been commanded. We say: we hear and obey, and we sacrifice the food, then the poor who possess it can choose to do what they want with it. If they want they can eat it, if they want they can store it, if they want they can sell it if they want they can gift it and if they want they can give it as a charity on their own behalf. There is nothing upon us if they do this. What we have been commanded to do is to give them an amount of food." [Fatawa al-Haram al-Makki]

The only school that does allow the payment of zakat al-fitr in the form of cash instead is the Hanafi madhab. May Allah bless the scholars and Imams of the madhab. They were preceded in this position by Imam Hasan al-Basri, Imam Abu Ishaq al-Sabi'i, and Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz.

Umar Ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz: Waqi' narrated through Qura who said, "We received a letter from 'Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz رحمه الله concerning zakat al-fitr. It said, 'Half a saa' for each person or its equivalent of half a dirham.'" [Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah] This shows that it was a legal order enforced throughout the caliphate.

It was reported that Qadhi Abu Yusuf رحمه الله said: "To me, it is better to give flour than wheat. And giving the value in money is better to me than flour and wheat, as that is closer to ward off the need of the poor."

Sheikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله also to some extent allows zakat al-fitr to be given in cash only in the case of a necessity. He wrote, "The apparent opinion is that giving out the equivalent value without a necessity or an overwhelming interest is forbidden. Otherwise, there is no harm." [Majmu' al-Fatawa]. Similarly, the opinion maintaining that the obligation of zakat al-fitr is fulfilled by giving out the equivalent value in cash was mentioned in a report from Imam Ahmed which Imam al-Mawardi رحمه الله cited in his Al-Insaf. Both the Maliki and Hanbali schools have secondary positions within the madhab that allow payment in cash.

A very interesting evidence to back this position is the judgement of Mu'adh Ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه as the Governor of Yemen. Imam Bukhari records that Mu'adh told the people of Yemen to give him clothes and robes in lieu of grain, since giving cloth would be easier for them, and more useful for the people of Madinah, where the zakat was headed.



Here, Mu'adh did not take their zakat in the way it normally would have been taken (sheep, goats, grain, silver, gold), but rather took its equivalent in another commodity. The Prophet ﷺ described Mu'adh as being the most knowledgeable of the matters of halal and haram.

Imam al-Sarkhasi al-Hanafi رحمه الله wrote, "It is permissible in our school to give out the value of wheat since the criterion is fulfilling the needs of the people and this is met by giving zakat al-fitr in cash as well as in the form of wheat grain. (However), Al-Shafi'i maintains that this is impermissible. The differences in opinion (on whether zakat al-fitr is to be paid in cash or in kind) are based on (the scholarly differences over) the payment of zakat on crops. Abu Bakr al-A'mash (may Allah be have mercy on him) used to say: 'It is better to give out (zakat al-fitr) as wheat grain than to give out its equivalent value because this is closer to conforming with the apparent meaning of the Prophetic hadith on the subject and evades the scholarly differences and is therefore, more religiously cautious.'



(On the other hand), the scholar Abu Ja'far used to say, 'It is better to give out the equivalent value (of zakat al-fitr) because this is closer to benefitting the poor who will be able to buy their immediate needs.' The reason for specifying wheat grain and barley at the time of the Prophet was that they were used for barter at that time. But here, currency which is the medium of exchange is used and so it is better to give out (zakat al-fitr) in cash." [Al-Mabsut]

Based on the above, it is best to remain on the safe side and give zakat al-fitr in the form of staple food and not in cash. If the argument is to merely aid the person, then we have zakat al-maal and normal sadaqah to cover for that. What is the need to change this once-a-year restricted act of worship for this? That being said, it needs to be remembered that there is a valid difference of opinion on the matter and the people following the advice of their teachers are to be respected and not rebuked as they have done what Allah has asked them to do and ask a person of knowledge.

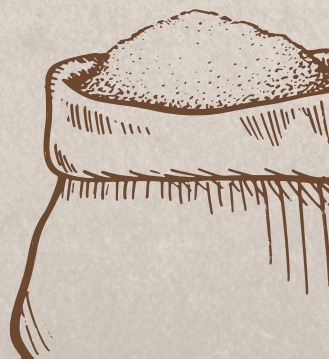
Imam Sufyan al-Thawri رحمه الله said, "As for the issues about which the jurists differed: I do not denounce any of my brothers from acting on them." [Al-Faqih wal-Mutafaqih]

Imam al-Suyuti رحمه الله said, "What is differed upon is not to be denounced. Denunciation only takes place [if someone opposes] the agreed upon." [al-Ashbah]

رحمه الله Imam Sufyan al-Thawri

***"As for the issues about which the jurists differed: I do not denounce any of my brothers from acting on them."***

[Al-Faqih wal-Mutafaqih]



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